



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1311 Vienna, 29 April 2021

EU Statement in Response to the Report of the Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, Ambassador Valeriu Chiveri

The European Union warmly welcomes Ambassador Chiveri to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his comprehensive report. We attach great importance to the work of the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe and appreciate the valuable cooperation with the EU Delegation to Tajikistan. We commend the Office for maintaining its operational capacity under pandemic related restrictions and challenges.

We strongly support the ongoing use of the Partnership Platform, a relevant framework for a collaborative multi-stakeholder process to set the Programme Office's agenda on a strategic level and conduct a review process. The Office's access to and interaction with civil society should be unhindered, and co-operation with the Office should have no detrimental consequences for the civil society organisations involved.

We welcome the Office's activities across all three OSCE dimensions and appreciate the continuous mainstreaming of human rights and gender with special respect to the advancement of the Tajik National Action Plan on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

We welcome the Office's community-based approach to tackle VERLT and its consultative assistance to Tajikistan's new National Strategy and Action Plan on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism 2021-2025. The approach to ensure that the fight against VERLT is not at the expense of human rights and fundamental freedoms is of substantial importance.

We are also happy for the continuation of the EU supported initiative to enhance the operational capacities of Tajik Border Troops to address security-related threats stemming from the southern border with Afghanistan. We commend the Office for its flexibility in implementation of the activities despite of the persistent pandemic. We encourage Tajikistan to continue to take active part in the EU-funded Border Management Programme in Central Asia - BOMCA 10, and welcome the inclusion of Afghanistan in the programme.

We value the work of the Border Management Staff College as an Academic Center of Excellence delivering high quality training. It continues to play a key role in building capacity of the border-related agencies of Tajikistan and the region. We therefore reiterate that the BMSC should be funded from the Unified Budget, at least partially, to provide financial reliability and stability.

We particularly welcome the Office's anti-corruption work and Tajikistan's resolve to implement the Financial Action Taskforce recommendations. The EU, within the framework of the OSCE and through its bilateral co-operation programmes, stands ready to support the authorities of Tajikistan to reinforce further public trust in institutions. We sincerely hope that the new National Anti-Corruption Strategy will be approved this year.

We remain concerned about the human rights situation in Tajikistan and stress the importance of the Office's activities in the Human Dimension. We welcome its support to government and civil society in implementing the State Programme on Human Rights Education and the National Strategy on Human Rights Protection. We reiterate the importance of the Programme Offices work to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment and we urge Tajikistan to ratify the Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.

We welcome the activities focused on empowering women and strengthening their role in public and political participation, as well as on combating domestic violence, an issue on the rise during the pandemic. We praise the support provided to 14 Women's Resource Centers and their network activities, especially in providing counselling to domestic violence victims. We welcome that the Office continues to give this work priority and adapt assistance by online means under COVID-19 restrictions.

We also consider work on freedom of the media and freedom of expression to be a priority. We call on the authorities to implement all OSCE commitments on freedom of

expression and media freedom in full and to make sure that critical voices can be heard and that journalists and media actors can benefit from the amended Code of Ethics.

On this occasion, we underline the EU Strategy on Central Asia focusing on promoting resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation in Central Asia to forge a strong and durable partnership between the EU and Central Asia. The promotion and protection of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, civil society, the rights of women and vulnerable groups, sustainable development and good governance must remain at the core of the relations. Working collaboratively with the OSCE and the field missions, including the Programme Office in Dushanbe, is an important component of the Strategy and we look forward to enhancing this further.

Finally, we once again thank Ambassador Chiveri for presenting his report and wish him and his team much success.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.